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AUTHOR Bennett, Ralph John
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ABSTRACT

Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, offers a program toward a bachelor's degree by attending evening classes exclusively. During visits made to personnel directors of firms employing 50 or more persons, complete presentations of the entire program were made. Registration was done by mail. Some students received reimbursement from firms, Veterans' Administration, and foundations. A pay-as-you-learn plan enabled others to attend. The students had a varied educational background. Approximately 8% were members of minority groups; 15% were women. There were four 12-week evening sessions and the students attended once weekly. Data were collected from industrial psychologists, Chambers of Commerce, and professional business associations to provide information for identifying and hiring experts in management and marketing, electronic data processing, auditing, business law, insurance, advertising, and so on. Full time faculty taught theoretically oriented courses. Life experience courses were offered with certain stipulations. Each student was exposed to three types of personalized counseling: embryonic (three-hour meeting prior to admission), "ad hoc" (meeting anytime at student's request), and mandatory (meeting at the middle of each quadmester). (Author/NL)

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CAREER ACTION -- A MOST UNIQUE AND PRAGMATIC EVENING DEGREE COMPLETION PROGRAM EXCLUSIVELY FOR FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES
(Bachelor of Science in Business Administration)

by

Ralph John Bennett, B.S. in C., B.A., M.A., M.B.A., Ph.D.
Director and Author of the Career Action Program

AQUINAS COLLEGE
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN
January, 1971

AC 008 996

Dedicated to

the Dominican Sisters, Order of Preachers and the Dominican Fathers

and especially to

my Secretary

Peg MacMillan,

without whose valuable assistance this program would not
have materialized to the degree that is has

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PART I

BACKGROUND: A DREAM REALIZED

This writer has had a dream for over ten years which was finally realized in March, 1969. Essentially, the dream consisted of a stark realization that there are a number of competent people out there in the "real world" who either didn't have the opportunity to earn a degree when they were graduated from high school or who didn't capitalize on the opportunity and who now find themselves severely impeded insofar as "getting a crack" at the better jobs is concerned. As a matter of fact, today, the "draw bridge" doesn't even drop for the man or woman who is seeking a good "white collar" job unless he already holds that sheepskin. Regardless of how loyal, intelligent, creative, resourceful or efficacious a man or woman is today, in many firms, there are a number of "certain jobs" for which he never will be seriously considered if he doesn't possess at least a bachelor's degree. In many cases, this procedure leads to underemployment, as a number of workers who hold degrees can't "cut the mustard", but the corollary is true also, namely, many workers who don't hold a degree, but can "cut the mustard", don't get the opportunity to fill the many jobs whose specification calls for a degree holder. The possibility of a full-time "breadwinner" being able

to forsake his or her job for one to four years in order to go to college to earn a bachelor's degree, coupled with incurring the cost of a full-time education, is simply beyond the capability of a great majority of the labor force.

What has been the reaction of the various colleges and universities throughout our country to this dire need and dilemma of a portion of the U.S. labor force? The answer is--virtually nothing. The "Hitchcock irony" is, that with the proliferation of evening M.B.A. programs, it is much, much easier to obtain a master's degree in the evening than to obtain all of the requirements for a bachelor's degree exclusively in the evenings. The latter is virtually impossible.

For example, Michigan is certainly not a backward State with respect to higher education. However, there is nowhere within the State of Michigan (with the exception of a university in the Detroit area where a law degree can be obtained in the evening) except in the Aquinas College Career Action Evening Degree Completion Program, where a complete bachelor's degree can be earned with majors in Accounting, Business Administration and/or Economics through evening participation only and which is exclusively oriented towards the older full-time labor force participants.

Beginning in fall, 1971, a minor in Engineering can also be obtained within the Career Action Program.

This writer attempted to put this program into being in 1960, 1962 and 1966 respectively to no avail until Dr. Norbert J. Hruby moved from Chicago to take over the Presidency of Aquinas in March, 1969. Immediately subsequent to reviewing the author's program coupled with making several suggestions, he said to this writer, "Beautiful, Bennett, go do it". Thus, Career Action was born, thereby "opening up a door" to the full-time workers in Western Michigan that was never open to them before.

PART II

METHOD OF PROMULGATION

The program was introduced into the Grand Rapids metropolitan area by personal visits by the writer to the various personnel directors of firms employing fifty or more persons, at which time complete presentations of the entire program were made. To date, he has visited over 250 firms in Grand Rapids, Fremont, Grand Haven, Holland, Hastings, Muskegon and Zeeland. Approximately 80 additional firms are scheduled to be visited within the short-run. In addition, upon request, he has made a number of presentations to various Chambers of Commerce, business associations, professional associations, non-profit organizations and to the three paramount public junior colleges within the metropolitan area.

The response to these presentations has been extremely positive. As a matter of fact, the modal comment was, "Why hasn't someone done this years ago?"

PART III

THW WORKER-STUDENTS: WHO ARE THEY?

To date, approximately 360 full-time workers within the Grand Rapids metropolitan area have been accepted into the Career Action Program, 80 per cent of whom are between the ages of 25 and 55. Thus, metaphorically speaking, they are a "horse of a different color" than our full-time students. In essence, they are the type of individuals who believe that in order to get output, you need input and most things in life that are worth while take effort. Approximately 8 per cent of them are members of minority groups, while some 15 per cent are women.

In terms of their current occupational status, the range is broad: from Vice-Presidents down to employees who are clerking and working on the line. The modal representation is that of middle and lower managerial types as well as upper clerical. However, there are also social workers, policemen, nurses, foremen and union representatives, etc.

With respect to their contemporary status in conjunction with earned college credits, many are beginning from "scratch", others have a smattering of college credits, and some already hold degrees with other than Accounting, Business Administration or Economics majors. A far majority of them come into our program

from junior colleges and business schools. Thus, we have a very diversified student body which certainly makes for challenging evening classes.

PART IV

THE SIX MOST UNIQUE AND PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF THE PROGRAM

FACULTY

This writer has accumulated over 300 semester hours to date, six of which have been in Personnel Management, besides which he has read and synthesized several Personnal Management textbooks, and could offer the students an "acceptable" course in Personnel Management. However, the reader and this writer both know that a personnel manager who is "worth his salt" learns things the first three months on the job that are never put into print. The point is--what is the implication for the teachers of said pragmatic subjects?--The answer is, quite a profound one.

The writer has identified approximately 30 of the courses within the 3 majors that are offered in the Career Action Program which though certainly not devoid of principles, tend to be pragmatically inclined, e.g., the various management and marketing courses, electronic data processing, auditing, business law, insurance, advertising, etc.

Further, he has collected excellent "intelligence data" from the leading industrial psychologists, the various Chambers of Commerce, and professional business associations to identify within the Grand Rapids metropolitan area those men considered

to be the "senior practioners" with respect to the above referenced 30 courses.

Subsequently, he contacted many of these professionals, explained the complete program and offered them the status of lecturer to teach for a professional fee one course in their area of competence. The "captains of industry" responded most willingly to the plea of this writer. An example of the professional men teaching in Career Action are as follows: Gene Weinsheim, Internal Auditor at American Seating Company teaching Auditing; Peter Walsh, Systems Manager at Rapistan, Inc., teaching Production Management; David Radius, Vice-President, Old Kent Bank and Trust Co., teaching Principles of Management; John Thomas, Jr., Systems Manager, H. H. Cutler Company teaching Electronic Data Processing, (Thomas has taught 7,000 classroom hours for IBM and Remington Rand and received laudatory ratings); George LaVoie, Vice-President and Personnel Manager of the Union Bank and Trust Company teaching Personnel Management (by role playing); Edward T. Arnsberger, (twice graduate of Harvard who has spent 30 years in top management consulting throughout the nation) teaching Policies of Business Organization and Management; Dr. Paul Fuller (Industrial Psychologist) formerly with Lear Siegler Co. teaching Industrial Psychology; Robert Carpenter (past President of the Grand Rapids Advertising Council), Advertising Coordinator

for WOOD-TV teaching Advertising; Edward Pulaski, Manager, Insurance and Contracts Department, Rapistan, Inc., teaching Insurance; Richard Jarman, Production Manager, Corporate Development at the Gerber Company teaching Principles of Marketing; James Lloyd, Vice-President of Marketing at the Bissell Company teaching Advanced Marketing; Gary Schenk, J.D., teaching Business Law; James Mackraz (U.S. Federal Labor Mediator, U.S. Department of Labor) teaching Labor Economics; Oliver Robinson, Vice-President, Union Bank and Trust Company teaching Financial Statement Analysis; Richard Kennedy, Director of Marketing Services, American Seating Company teaching Marketing Management; Archie Hall, top programmer for the Rapistan Company, teaching Programming, and Robert Mersereau, Vice-President, Kent Research and Investment Company teaching Investments and James Ishee, Controller, Teledyne, Continental Motors teaching Budgeting.

Preview of coming attractions--Carl Morgenstern, President and Chairman of the Board, Old Kent Bank and Trust Company teaching Money and Banking, Thomas Gleason, Vice-President of Wolverine World Wide teaching Corporate Finance, Phil Matthews, Vice-President of Gulf and Western Company teaching Financial Statement Analysis, and Dale Disher, Vice-President of Finance, Amway Corporation teaching Budgeting.

Thus, in essence, the faculty of the Career Action Evening

Degree Completion Program consists of a dove-tailing of two types, on the one hand we have the "senior" professional pragmatic practioner teaching a majority of the business courses. These men--who also have the academic credentials--add a "flavor and a tinge" that no amount of degrees can add. On the other hand, we have the "selected" full-time faculty members at Aquinas with the appropriate letters behind their names teaching the theoretically oriented courses. With respect to the latter group, this writer has been at Aquinas now for eleven years, and is in an excellent position to select the "master teachers" from the full-time faculty to teach the "support" type courses, e.g., the social and natural sciences and the humanities within the evening degree program.

Thus, one can readily see by scanning the above, that in 95 per cent of the cases, the worker-student comes into contact with truly outstanding teachers. In essence, those students who complete the entire program will wind up with a "super baccalaureate" degree, as there is no other college or university within the State of Michigan which has put together such a faculty as this writer has within the Career Action Evening Degree Completion Program at Aquinas College.

LIFE EXPERIENCE CREDIT

If a worker-student within the Career Action program believes that he has a set of experiences from life (remembering that approximately 80 per cent of the 360 Career Action students are between the ages of 25 and 55) which come close to the set of experiences that he would get from taking one or more of the 500 courses that Aquinas offers, and can prove same, he will be given college credit on his transcript and counseled into other course areas where he doesn't have an insight.

Two constraints operate relative to the possibility of life experience credit. They are: 1) a worker-student must have successfully completed (with a grade of C or higher) at least one course for three quadmesters before he is eligible to apply for life experience credit; and 2) a maximum of 30 semester hours of the 124 semester hours required for a degree may be earned through life experience credit. The modal amount granted to date on a per capita basis is 6 semester hours.

In essence, we are living in an era in which the premium is on formal education wherein a student goes from one professional, doctor, technician, or artisan "type" to another in classroom situations which are largely artifically structured. However, this writer disagrees from professors of other universities and colleges, in the sense that he believes that a formal education isn't the

only source of knowledge tantamount to college-level material. For example, many firms have their own schools, e.g., GM Institute, the American Institute of Banking, etc. Or take the case of the worker-student who has painted or sculpted for a number of years, who has gone to various art exhibits and read books in this area. If that worker-student in our Career Action program claims knowledge equivalent to that of an Art Appreciation course, then this writer coordinates an evening appointment between that student and the chairman of the particular department involved, namely, in this case, the Art Department. At this time, the student displays his work and is questioned on these and other items, related to what would be covered in the course. If, in the professional opinion of the chairman, the personal experiences of the worker-student are equal to or greater than the set of experiences that he would derive from taking the Art Appreciation course in the normal way, he will be given credit on his transcript--Art Appreciation, Art 101, 3 semester hours, pass. However, if the chairman finds that the personal experiences are not tantamount to the experience to be gained from the course, no credit will be given.

The same is true for the worker-student who has been active in the toastmasters for several years, and who applies for life experience credit in our Public Speaking course. Again, this writer will coordinate an evening appointment between that worker-student

and the Chairman of the Speech Department, at which time, the chairman would validate the letters of participation from the respective chapter presidents of the toatmasters, etc. If, in the professional opinion of the Chairman of the Speech Department, the worker-student possesses the equivalency of the experiences that he would receive from taking the speech course, credit will be given on the transcript--Fundamentals of Public Speaking, Speech 101, 3 semester hours of credit, pass. If, on the other hand, the Chairman feels that the experiences of the worker-student are not analogous to those that would have been derived from taking the course, no credit will be given.

Or take the case of a worker-student who can play a musical instrument and/or read music, and who desires credit for the Music Appreciation course--Music 213. Then, this writer will coordinate an evening appointment between that student and the Chairman of the Music Department, who at that time will test, question, require the worker-student to demonstrate proficiency in a musical instrument, read music, etc. Again, if, in the professional opinion of the chairman, equivalency in experience exists, credit will be granted, otherwise, it will be denied.

In addition, there are many fine military technical schools in such areas as procurement, supply, data processing, finance, logistics, aircraft maintenance, cartography, metrology, etc, which provide the equivalent of two or three college level courses. For

example, most of the technical schools within the area of electronics (this writer is the Commander of an Air Force Reserve Communications & Electronics unit) average 8 months of full-time study which are easily equivalent to college-level electronics and physics courses.

As a matter of fact, during this writer's presentation of the Career Action program to nearly 250 individual firms within the metropolitan area, one personnel manager himself was interested in entering our program. He stipulated to this writer the following, "As you know I am the personnel manager of a large national firm, part of which is based here in Grand Rapids. But, what you don't know, is that I have been in personnel work for 27 years now, and have two years of college, and have sent my children through college. Now, at my age, it isn't necessarily the economic payback or the status symbol as much as it is for a sense of satisfaction, that I would like to "finish up" my bachelor degree. Thus, since I perceive your program to be the most practical and relevant higher educational plan that I have ever heard of, I personally am interested in entering it. In particular, what could you possibly do for such a person as myself with respect to possible college credit re my life experience?"

The response of this writer was that 27 years is certainly a long time and that personnel management is certainly an important area, but, because all of his experiences were in one functional field, the very best we could do for him, subsequent to validating

his job descriptions would be to grant credit for Personnel Management, Principles of Management and possibly Labor Economics, if he had enough industrial relations experience within the context of his personnel work.

Thus, it can be seen that we aren't sending any "care packages" nor are there any USO signs swinging in the breeze with free coffee and doughnuts for the troopers, as we have too good an academic name in the community for that type of philosophy, as well as the fact that such a policy wouldn't be meaningful for the workers themselves.

Rather, probability says, that x percentage of the experiences of x percentage of our 360 worker-students will, in a few cases, come fairly close to the set of experiences that they would get from taking one or more of our 500 courses, and if they can prove this competence, we will give them a legitimate short-cut to their degree, and rightfully so.

CONTINUOUS PERSONALIZED COUNSELING

The attention to and quality of counseling that is available at a great majority of college campuses today leaves much to be desired. As a matter of fact, this writer would hypothesize that at minimum, 20 per cent of the college population doesn't even know the name of their counselor, because, in many cases, they simply aren't assigned and/or the counselors don't have the time to effectuate a relevant and meaningful rapport with the students.

However, this writer, as Director of Career Action, insists on providing continuous personalized counseling with every single Career Action student. In particular, three types of continuous personalized counseling are experienced by our worker-students, they are: the embryonic counseling, the "ad hoc" counseling and the mandatory recounseling which begins at the middle of each quadmester.

The embryonic counseling consists of meeting on an average of three hours with each new worker prior to his or her being admitted into the program. Three items are accomplished during the embryonic counseling. They are as follows:

1) The candidate is given the 40 minute SCAT test to help ascertain if he would have a reasonable chance of success throughout the program. Also, coordination is effectuated for the applicant

to take the GED test, if he or she is not a high school graduate.

2) The entire program is explained in detail to the candidate coupled with answering any of his questions pertaining to same.

3) Predicated on which major the new applicant desires, this writer completes in duplicate a sheet which shows all of the requirements for the degree as well as the particular major requirements that have already been met in the case of the applicant who has earned previous college credits and transferred same into our program. The sheets are dated and signed by this writer with the original being given to the applicant and the duplicate retained in our files. Moreover, the sheets are fully explained to the applicant so there is no possibility of misunderstanding as to exactly where he stands at the onset.

The second type of counseling that is consistently available to the worker-student, is the "ad hoc" type, in which the writer stipulates to all new students that he is personally available virtually anytime (mostly, but not exclusively during the evenings, as all of our worker-students work during the day hours) for individualized and personalized counseling should any problem occur at anytime whether it be once a year, once a month or once a week. In other words, we CARE about them as INDIVIDUAL HUMAN BEINGS as well as students.

The third type of counseling is a mandatory type of re-counseling required at the beginning of the middle of each quadmester in which each active Career Action student meets individually with the Director. At that time, the Director effectuates two things:

1) A "debriefing" re the courses in which the student is currently enrolled, in which the writer ascertains the student's evaluation of said courses, and:

2) Subsequent to the writer reviewing the complete file, he stipulates to the worker-student that relative to a) his completed college work to date, b) his declared major and c) the particular "mix" of courses which are being offered in the ensuing quadmester, which courses he might take in the next quadmester. Further, in conjunction with this last type of counseling, the writer indicates how each possible course that is taken will affect the overall program, e.g., if this course is selected, it will go towards satisfying the major requirement or, if this course is selected, it will count towards the humanities, etc.

Frankly, this writer knows of no college or university where the students even begin to experience such continuous personalized counseling. As a matter of fact, over 100 of our 360 worker-students have commented at the end of the embryonic counseling, "Dr. Bennett, I want you to know that I have received much more attention and counseling at the very onset of your program than I have received in all of my prior college work that I am transferring into Aquinas.

REGISTRATION PROCEDURE

Generally speaking, the registration procedure at most colleges and universities is atrocious, as it requires the "write off" of at least a half-day, and in many cases a whole day on the part of the students who are attempting to register. Typically, the colleges and universities require all students to report to the gymnasium over a two-day period, twice a year, in order to effectuate registration. The modal situation is one in which we find a myriad of students roaming around the gym which at this time is typically hot, crowded, stuffy, noisy, etc, where numerous cards and forms must be picked up at x set of tables, prepared and deposited at a different x set of tables.

In the Career Action program, however, all registration is effectuated through the mail. At the embryonic registration, only five cards must be prepared and sent through the mail with either full payment of tuition or one-fourth down payment, if the pay-as-you-learn plan is elected. Upon receipt of the foregoing, we send the following to the student-worker: an ID card which is valid for one year re library purposes, etc, a parking sticker which is also valid for one year coupled with our sending a cl$_a$ss card to the respective professors re that student's particular registration. All subsequent registrations beyond the original, require the worker-student to fill out one card and to mail same to us. In essence, there are no lines required for our students.

PAY-AS-YOU-LEARN

A majority of the approximate 250 firms to which this writer has made individual presentations have some type of educational reimbursement programs included in their "fringe packages." In addition, if the worker-student is a veteran and is taking one course each quadmester, the V.A. will pay full tuition, and if the veteran is taking two courses (3 semester hours each course), the V.A. will certify and pay him on a half-time basis. A yearly $2,000 grant has been received by the Career Action program from the Dyer Ives Foundation, in which one-third of the tuition of any "minority student" in the Career Action Program, will be paid out of the fund until it is depleted, if the minority worker-student or his firm pay the other two-thirds.

Aquinas College is no different from most other private colleges within the U.S. today namely, academically speaking, the college is strong, but, economically speaking, the college is "listing", e.g., a $300,000 deficit has been incurred for each of the last two years, coupled with the fact that our total portfolio (endowment) equals only $8,000. Thus, because of the liquidity position, the college can't offer any internal grants to the Career Action worker-students who have a real need.

A number of our worker-students are not veterans or minority members, nor do their firms aid them with respect to their education. Thus, we have established a pay-as-you-learn plan, in which any worker-

student may elect to pay only one-fourth down at registration, another one-fourth in two weeks, another one-fourth two weeks later and the last installment at the end of the sixth week. This procedure permits many worker-students to pay for their education over a number of pay checks, rather than having their disposable income depleted at one time.

QUADMESTER BASIS

The Career Action Program is scheduled on a quadmester basis which consists of four, twelve-week evening sessions, in which, the worker-student comes to the college one evening per week from 7:00 to 10:20 for twelve weeks for each 3 semester hour course he is pursuing.

In the quadmester, the worker-student has perfect flexibility, in the sense that he can obtain the degree as quickly or as slowly as he desires. Approximately half of our worker-students are taking two courses (6 semester hours) each quadmester, as they realize they are older than regular college age students and desire to get the economic pay back on their degree.

Let us take the worst possible case (time-wise), namely, the worker-student who enters the Career Action Program with zero college credits, and further, who has no possibility of obtaining college credit re his life experiences. Starting from absolute scratch, and by coming to the college 2 evenings per week each quadmester for 5 years, he can effectuate the complete degree requirements for his bachelor degree (2 evening courses per week each quadmester represents 6 semester hours per quadmester, times four equals 24 semester hours a year times five equals 120 semester hours of the 124 needed for graduation). Thus, the Career Action Program makes it possible for a worker-student who is just beginning his college

work, to earn an excellent bachelor degree in a very mature and pragmatic evening degree completion program (and one in which in 95 per cent of the cases he will come into contact with absolutely outstanding teachers and/or professionals) while retaining his full-time job. Needless to say, this opportunity represents a substantial savings to the worker who desires to earn a bachelor degree. Otherwise, he would have to forego income from full-time employment for four full years at almost any other college or university, in order to obtain said degree--and how many adults can afford that?

In conclusion, by "opening up the doors" to the full-time workers in Western Michigan that have been closed to them before, the Career Action Evening Degree Completion Program represents one of the ways in which Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, Michigan can be said to be truly serving both the individual person and the industrial sector of said region.

PART V

BRIEF RĒSUMĒ OF AQUINAS COLLEGE

Aquinas College is a private, independent Liberal Arts College which was founded in 1923. Current full-time enrollment is approximately 1200. The college is fully accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and is licensed by the State Department of Public Instruction of the State of Michigan. The full-time faculty members number 97 with many part-time lecturers in specialized courses. Currently, 6 different bachelor degrees are offered with a possibility of selecting a major from 25 different disciplines.

PART VI

RESUME OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE CAREER ACTION PROGRAM

Ralph John Bennett was born on May 29, 1932 at Litchfield, Ill., and was raised in St. Louis, Missouri. He received the Bachelor of Science in Commerce from St. Louis University, the Bachelor of Arts from the University of Denver, the Master of Arts from St. Louis University, the Master of Business Administration from Western Michigan University and the Doctor of Philosophy from St. Louis University. He is currently working on the Master of Labor and Industrial Relations degree (part-time) at Michigan State University. He is married and has two daughters. Dr. Bennett has worked in industry for two years, e.g., the Standard Oil Company and with the Royal Carburetor Company. He served three years on active duty with the U.S.A.F., two of which were spent throughout the Far East during the latter part of the Korean War. He is currently a Major in the USAFR (Mich. ANG) and is the Commander of the 110th Communications Electronics Flight at the Battle Creek ANG Base. He has been teaching at the college level (Economics and Accounting) for fourteen years to date, and is currently a full professor at Aquinas. His hobby is Amateur Radio and his call sign is W8GGN.

In addition to creating the Career Action Evening Degree

Program, two years ago he had the privilege of teaching the first college credit course within the walls of the maximum security block at a Michigan State Prison to forty-five "lifers".

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